

Amendments to the Drawings

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to Fig. 1. This sheet replaces the original sheet for Fig. 1.

Remarks/Arguments

Request for Reconsideration

Applicants have carefully considered the matters raised by Examiner in the outstanding Office Action, but remain of the position that patentable subject matter is present. Applicants respectfully requests reconsideration of Examiner's position based on the amendments to the specification, amendments to the claims, amendments to the drawings and the following remarks.

Drawings

The drawings had been objected to because Figure 1 should be designated by a legend, such as --Prior Art--.

Figure 1 has been amended. A replacement sheet for Figure 1 is attached.

Specification

The abstract had been objected to because it contained multiple paragraphs and implied phrases, including "The invention relates" (line 1 of paragraph 1) and "The invention is distinguished" (line 1 of paragraph 2).

The abstract has been amended accordingly and is now deemed proper.

The specification had also been objected to because it contained references to specific claim numbers which must be deleted.

The specification has been amended to remove references to specific claim numbers.

Claim Status and Comments

Claims 1 and 4-6 are pending. Claim 1 has been amended to place the claim in more conventional U.S. format and to further distinguish the claimed invention over the prior art references. Claims 2 and 3 have been canceled. Claims 4-6 have been amended to place the claims in more conventional U.S. format. Further details of the claim amendments will be discussed below.

Claimed Invention

The claimed invention discloses a bearing arrangement having an annular clearance located in at least one of the shaft plates with an inner circumference that is inwardly open in the radial direction. The clearance diverts partial forces transmitted from a spacer ring of the bearing to a lower shaft plate so that rolling bodies of rolling body sets are acted upon by the force in a uniform manner over their entire length. By incorporating the clearance, the rolling bodies no longer transmit forces over only part of their axial length. The clearance prevents overload peaks in rolling bodies and raceways from forming. Thus, the clearance is beneficial in the operation and in extending the service life of the bearing.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner made the following rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a): (1) Claims 1-6 had been rejected as being unpatentable over Applicant's admitted prior art reference of Figure 1 (AAPA) in view of Ramsey (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/010842); (2) Claims 1-5 had also been rejected as being unpatentable over Applicant's admitted prior

art reference of Figure 1 (AAPA) in view of Furukoshi, *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,280,095); and (3) Claims 1-6 had been rejected as being unpatentable over Applicant's admitted prior art reference of Figure 1 (AAPA) in view of Nakamura, *et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 4,545,627).

Claim 1 has been amended to place the claim in more conventional U.S. format and further distinguish over the prior art references. The claimed invention is distinguishable from the prior art reference of Figure 1 (AAPA) in view of Ramsey, Furukoshi and/or Nakamura.

As noted by the Examiner, the prior art reference of Figure 1 (AAPA) fails to disclose at least one of the shaft plates being provided at an inner circumference with an annular clearance which is inwardly open in the radial direction.

The Examiner first turned to Ramsey stating that Ramsey teaches an inner race (44) which has a recess for accommodating a retaining ring (50) for joining the race to the shaft and that Ramsey combined with the prior art reference of Figure 1 (AAPA) would teach the claimed invention. However, Applicants respectfully disagree.

Ramsey discloses an inner race (44) located or housed within an outer race (36) that is connected to the drive or prop shaft (26) of a vehicle. The retaining ring (50) of Ramsey is located on an inside surface of the inner race (44) to allow for a connection of the prop shaft (26) to the inner race (44). Ramsey does not disclose a shaft plate having an annular clearance at an inner circumference which is inwardly open in a radial direction. First, as noted, Ramsey fails to disclose a shaft plate. An inner race is not equivalent to a shaft plate. As disclosed in claim 1, the shaft plates of the claimed invention are located between two rolling body sets. Thus, the shaft plates act, at the

same time, as both inner and outer rings. Further, the clearance is located in the shaft plate, not on the inner or outer edge of the shaft plate. Second, it cannot be assumed Ramsey has an annular clearance since such a clearance is now shown or described. Ramsey merely states a retaining ring is located on an inside surface of the inner ring. (see, Ramsey, right col. 2, para. [0025]). If the inner ring had an annular groove or equivalent it would most likely be stated in the specification as the specification of Ramsey clearly noted the outer race has an indentation to place the ball races. (see, Ramsey, right col. 2, para. [0024]). Third, although not shown or described, even assuming Ramsey has an annular clearance, the clearance could not be inwardly open in a radial direction as the drive or prop shaft of Ramsey would be fitted into the annular clearance, closing the clearance. Thus, the claimed invention is distinguishable from Ramsey. Therefore, the claimed invention is patentable over the prior art reference of Figure 1 (AAPA) in view of Ramsey.

The Examiner turned also to Furukoshi and Nakamura, stating both teach an inner race having a recess for accommodating a sealing ring. First, as noted above a shaft plate and an inner race are not equivalent. Second, there is no motivation, teaching or suggestion to combine the prior art reference of Figure 1 (AAPA) with Furukoshi or Nakamura. In general, annular grooves are well known in the art. However, the application and placement of an annular groove in the claimed invention unique. One skilled in the art would not have thought to incorporate an annular groove on a shaft plate in the manner disclosed in the claimed invention. Merely combining the prior art reference of Figure 1 (AAPA) arbitrarily with a bearing having an inner race with an

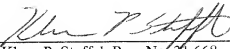
annular groove still does not teach the claimed invention. As such, the claimed invention is patentable over the prior art references.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested. Should any extensions of time or fees be necessary in order to maintain this Application in pending condition, appropriate requests are hereby made and authorization is given to debit Account Number 02-2275.

Respectfully submitted,

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